

VZCZCXYZ0001
RR RUEHWEB

DE RUEHIN #1370/01 3210837
ZNR UUUUU ZZH
R 170837Z NOV 09
FM AIT TAIPEI
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 2742
INFO RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING 9507
RUEHHK/AMCONSUL HONG KONG 0908

UNCLAS AIT TAIPEI 001370

SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/TC, EAP/P, EAP/PD - THOMAS HAMM
DEPARTMENT PASS AIT/WASHINGTON

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: U.S. PRESIDENT OBAMA'S TRIP TO ASIA

¶1. Summary: Taiwan's major Chinese-language dailies focused news coverage November 17 on a financial memorandum of understanding inked between Taiwan and China Tuesday evening; on U.S. President Barack Obama's visit to China and his town hall meeting with Chinese youth in Shanghai Tuesday afternoon; and on Taiwan's year-end city mayors' and county magistrates' elections. The KMT-leaning "China Times" ran a banner headline on page two, reading "Obama-Hu Meeting: There Will Be No Surprises in Terms of the Taiwan Issue."

¶2. A number of editorials and op-ed pieces in Taiwan's papers discussed Obama's visit to China. An op-ed in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" discussed the impact of Obama's China visit on Taiwan. The article said the ruling and opposition parties in Taiwan need to recognize the fundamental strategic changes in the United States' policy toward Asia and should thus work out a policy that meets Taiwan's interests and maintains the balance in Taiwan-U.S. relations. A news analysis and an op-ed in the pro-unification "United Daily News" both discussed the United States' current policy toward China, saying that Washington is determined to maintain a comprehensive, cooperative relationship with China. A "China Times" column, however, questioned whether Washington has really abandoned its long-adopted containment policy toward China. An editorial in the China-focused "Want Daily" described Obama as the U.S. president with the softest posture when visiting China. End summary.

A) "The Impact of Obama's China Visit on Taiwan"

Liu Shih-chung, now a Visiting Fellow at the U.S.-based Brookings Institution, opined in the mass-circulation "Apple Daily" [circulation 520,000] (10/30):

"U.S. President Barack Obama is currently in the middle of his first-ever trip to Asia and to China since he assumed office ten months ago. Judging from the fact that Washington already has determined that the cross-Straits situation is in a relatively stable state and thus there is not much to worry about, it is certain that the Taiwan issue will not become a point of interest in the 'Obama-Hu meeting.' For the ruling and opposition parties in Taiwan, the deeper-level implications [of such a development] is that they ought to recognize the fundamental strategic changes in the United States' Asia policy and, accordingly, work out a policy that meets Taiwan's interests and keeps the balance in Taiwan-U.S. relations.

"Obama's trip to China has two major objectives: First, based on the foundation of mutual trust [built] between the two sides over the past ten months, [he will] clearly define China as the United States' 'strategic partner.' ... Unlike the concept of 'strategic competitor' adopted in the initial stages of the Bush administration and that of 'a responsible stakeholder' coined in the second term of the Bush administration, the Obama administration has further advanced the U.S.-China relations to a level of 'strategic partnership.' [Obama sought to] strengthen 'strategic reassurance' on both sides in terms of the many issues requiring international cooperation, including the exchange rate of the Renminbi, Iran's and Pyongyang's denuclearization, and anti-terrorism, and he also took

advantage of his Asian trip this time to urge [the United States'] allies in the region to share the same awareness.

"The main reason why Washington is so sure of Beijing stems from the reinforcing mechanism of high-level dialogue between the United States and China. ... The second objective is to implement the U.S.-China consensus to combat climate change. ... [In order to] 'engage with China,' other topics such as China's human rights and democracy have thus become less important. ... Exactly due to [such a development], the Ma Ying-jeou administration's current pro-China policy, which has resulted in alleviated tensions in the Taiwan Strait, caters to Washington's likes. But such practices of making rapid and significant concessions to Beijing will not necessarily serve Taiwan's national interests, if they fail to win the United States' appropriate and timely commitment to Taiwan in return. The controversy caused by [Taiwan's'] reopening its market to U.S. beef, the long-stalled arms procurement deal for F16 C/D fighter jets, the fact that the resumption of the 'Trade and Investment Framework Agreement' talks will have to wait until the end of this year, and the pending visa-waiver program have all constituted the uncertain factors in Taiwan-U.S. relations. If the strengthening of Taiwan-U.S. relations has to depend on the stability of U.S.-China relations, Taiwan will be put in a disadvantageous situation where it can only look up to Beijing for its approval. ... Even though Obama has repeatedly guaranteed that the United States will not ignore Asia, the Ma administration still needs to have its own 'hedging' strategy. ..."

B) "In the Face of China's Rise, Smiling Obama [Makes] an Optimistic First Step?"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang wrote in an analysis in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/17):

"... The Obama administration is the [U.S. administration] that has enjoyed the smoothest relations with China during the transition period of [the U.S.] power transfer since Washington and Beijing established diplomatic ties in 1979. During his speech in Tokyo a few days ago, Obama avoided mentioning the differences between the two nations and said clearly that [he will not seek to] contain China. The Obama administration has set the tone of its China policy on maintaining a comprehensive, cooperative relationship with China. ... The Obama administration is facing the rise of China with a positive attitude and exploring the possibility of forming a 'partnership' with China to create a win-win situation. But still, the Obama administration has to pragmatically confront the differences between the two nations over fundamental values such as democracy and human rights, and the danger of conflicts over practical interests involving trade, economics and regional security. ..."

C) "Forgot [to Mention the] Taiwan Relations Act? Obama Shows the Sword without Drawing It out of the Sheath"

Professor Alexander Huang from Tamkang University's Graduate Institute of International Affairs & Strategic Studies, opined in the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 400,000] (11/17):

"... Both the United States and China are two big powers that have a huge influence on the world economy and security, and both sides have many issues on the global, regional and bilateral levels that they need to face and seek cooperation from each other. In the face of China's rapid rise in its economic and military power over the past two decades, the United States has naturally endured unprecedented threats since World War II in terms of its interests in Asia. The U.S. government now adopts a strategic guideline of 'facing the reality, getting along with each other pragmatically, reducing disputes and seeking a win-win situation' for its current policy toward China. Taiwan, without a doubt, needs to confront [such a development] with wisdom and prudence if it wants to maintain the maximum [amount] of its national interests while sandwiched between the two great powers. ..."

D) "Has Obama Really Abandoned the Containment Policy?"

The "International Lookout" column in the KMT-leaning "China Times"

[circulation: 120,000] wrote (11/17):

"The U.S. Obama administration has said it over and over again that it wants to attach great importance to Asia, but judging from his indifferent attitude toward the Asia-Pacific Economic Conference, one can hardly tell how much attention he has paid [to Asia]. ... One can say that it is for China that Obama has travelled eastbound this time. Visiting Tokyo, Seoul and Singapore are merely [stops] en route [to China]; he needs China, which is the only place where he can secure his national interests in the Asia Pacific [region]. Since Chinese people attach great importance to face, Obama will surely get what he expects by using his smooth talking, staying a few more days [in China], and showing some friendly gestures.

"Further, in his speech in Tokyo, Obama said, 'we welcome China's efforts to play a greater role on the world stage. In an inter-connected world, power does not need to be a zero-sum game, and China needs not fear the success of other countries. The United States does not seek to contain China. On the contrary, the rise of a strong, prosperous China can be a source of strength for the community of nations.' The focus of such remarks was that the United States has abandoned its long-adopted containment policy [toward China]. China of course loves to hear that, but it will not be so naive as to believe that the United States will cease its containment policy. ...

"The most confusing question that the Obama administration finds hard to face is: Which path will China take in the wake of its rise? How is the United States going to cope with it without endangering U.S. interests? The so-called 'rise of a strong, prosperous China' is just a statement to patronize and infatuate China. ..."

E) "Sino-U.S. Relations on the Move, the Invariable Spring Tide in [the River of] History"

The China-focused "Want Daily" [circulation: 10,000] editorialized (11/17):

"... Among all [the U.S. presidents that] have visited China, Obama is probably the one that has the softest posture. Neither does he promote American values or Washington [views], nor does he provoke [China by mentioning] sensitive issues such as China's human rights and religious freedom. Judging from the perspective of historical change and the global political and economic landscape, the soft

posture of Obama and his pragmatic attitude are actually part of the megatrend. The United States was severely traumatized by the global financial tsunami, yet China has become a major driver behind global economic recovery. [As a result,] the global power structure has undergone [fundamental] changes. ...

"Prior to his visit to Asia, the United States put forward three issues that it needed to reach an agreement with China over: re-balance the global economy, climate change and new energy, Iran and Afghanistan issues.... Obama has a very tough mission to accomplish, and the United States has very limited bargaining chips. This is the reason why Obama has to be very soft when visiting China, and it also reflected the change in the global landscape. ..."

STANTON